



"Dreamscape #1" by Werner Friesen

In Recital

Sandra Joy Friesen

Sunday, April 18, 2010 8:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Arts Building
University of Alberta

Program

Les langueurs-tendres (1716-17)	François Couperin
Les baricades mystérieuses (1716-17)	(1668-1733)
Transcendental Etude #11 (1851)	Franz Liszt
Harmonies du soir	(1811-1886)
Douze Études (1915)	Claude Debussy
I - pour les “cinq doigts”: <i>d’après Monsieur Czerny</i>	(1862-1918)
II - pour les Tierces	
III - pour les Quartes	
IV - pour les Sixtes	

Intermission

Douze Études (1915)	Claude Debussy
V - pour les Octaves	
VI - pour les huit doigts	
VII - pour les degrés chromatique	
VIII - pour les agréments	
IX - pour les notes répétées	
X - pour les Sonorités opposées	
XI - pour les Arpèges composés	
XII - pour les accords	

Reception in the Arts Lounge

By Chef Albert Kwok

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I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Bashaw and Dr. Ingraham for their guidance in my research, as well as professors Dr. Gramit and Dr. Moshaver for their assistance in course work and Ms. Janet Scott Hoyt for her continual encouragement. Most of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Jacques Després for his wisdom, interpretive inspirations, generosity, and for his genuine care and understanding.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Music Degree for Sandra Joy Friesen.

The repertoire for this recital was first inspired by my fascination with Claude Debussy's extraordinary ability to express the visual, the poetic and the sensual through the piano. After a lifetime of composing imagery in sound, Debussy set about a final project, his *Études*, that he hoped would solidify his status as a composer behind the greatness of Frederic Chopin and Franz Liszt – and his piano music to the transcendental. Choosing the *Études* in their entirety was therefore a logical decision. The second inspiration emerged from Debussy's musical heritage – the French Baroque tradition of François Couperin – and a later influence, the visionary Franz Liszt. The works on this program illustrate how masterfully these three transcended technique and the instrument, in order to communicate.

François Couperin was a composer with a penchant for the delights that surrounded him in the elegance of early 18th-century Versailles and the urban centre, Paris. He was not the first to impart descriptive titles to his pieces, but he was so inventive in his musical representations that he could be hailed as the first European composer of the “character piece.”

His intricate style of ornamentation not only decorates or extends melody notes, but also provides a specifically notated expressive intention. *Les langueurs-tendres* (Gentle Apathy) is in typical Baroque binary form: its harmonic and contrapuntal simplicity allow melodic beauty to be expressed through ornamentation that highlights dissonance and toys with rhythm. *Les baricades mystérieuses* (Mysterious Barricades) is a play on the word, in which overlapping lines and suspensions form a mysterious aural barricade.

Franz Liszt's music is a monumental bridge between the music of the young Romantics in the early 19th century and the early modernists at the other end of the century. Liszt is known for exceeding technical boundaries once thought impossible, and transporting literary inspirations into epic musical dramas. *Harmonies du soir* is one of the many powerful examples in which he merged compositional mastery with technical prowess. Through the opening distant A flat “bells,” delicate arpeggio decorations, thunderous chordal passages, and tender melody, he captures the passion and intimacy of evening harmonies.

Debussy composed the *Études* during a final remission of the cancer, unexpectedly feeling a profound musical rejuvenation. To get away from Paris, he retreated to his favored coastal village of Pourville, and composed – surrounded by rolling hills, pastoral fields, majestic cliffs, gusty coastal winds, the sea, the pebble beach and the endless sky. Dedicated to Chopin, the *Études* were not given imaginative titles, as was Debussy's usual practice; nor did they need any. Debussy paid no heed to the institutional rules of composition but followed his instinct and sensitivities in a collection of remarkable diversity. He looked back to Couperin's ornamental tradition, employing these rhythmically free style gestures in each étude, but especially in *étude pour les agréments* where ornaments become the significant musical content. Debussy greatly admired Bach and in *étude pour les huit doigts* he showed flights of finger fancy in a modernization of the Baroque improvisatory keyboard prelude. He was fascinated by the sounds of the Balinese Gamelan percussion instruments, recreating them in *étude pour les Quartes* with brilliant clanging chords. He used the idea of the 19th-century Romantic waltz in *étude pour les Octaves*, but rather than following the rhythmic rule of the dance form, he captured the waltz essence through unexpected rests and accents, dizzying leaps of octaves and quick changes of mood. He also paid homage to the great predecessors and teachers of modern piano technique: Carl Czerny, in *étude pour les "cinq doigts": d'après Monsieur Czerny* where the simple five-finger pattern is transformed into playful finger gymnastics; Frederic Chopin, in *étude pour les Tierces* where the mundane interval of the third is transfigured into poetry in which the rhythm seems to emulate the rolling of the sea; and Franz Liszt, both in *étude pour les notes répétées* – turning this notoriously difficult technical action into light-hearted expressions and percussive gestures of humour and wit —and in the final *étude pour les accords* with decisive chords bounding across the full keyboard range, framing an inner section of exquisite tenderness.

Debussy imbued his artistry with cool French charm but also with moments of unabashed romantic expression, and often with a spirit of improvisation and spontaneity. His extraordinary blend of virtuosity and artistry place these *Études* in a category all their own.

Sandra Joy Friesen

Sandra Joy performs internationally with a diverse range of repertoire and style, from classical to contemporary to modern improvisation.

Also passionate about Canadian music, Sandra has performed and taught Canadian music for many years. In November 2009, with solo piano recitals Sandra represented the University of Alberta and Canadian composers at the Brazil Association for Canadian Studies X Congress (Goiânia, Brazil) and before that, in October 2008, at the Mexican Association for Canadian Studies XIII Congress (Guadalajara, Mexico) supported by the Canadian Embassy in Mexico. Other recent international work has been a music and art improvisation performance project (London, UK; June 2009) with painter Werner Friesen and concert pianist Douglas Finch at Trinity/Laban College, and performances at the Castelfranc Piano Summer Music School (Tarn, France; August 2009). Sandra has recorded a solo piano volume *Garden of Music* by Alain Mayrand, and a commissioned work *To the Garden the World* by Stephen Chatman (CMC Centrediscs) nominated for a 2010 Juno Award. She has performed with several West Coast orchestras, recently premiering a concerto by Larry Nickel with the Canada West Chamber Orchestra, and receiving great acclamation for her performance of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with the San Capistrano Valley Symphony (Orange County, California, USA).

As a collaborative pianist, through July 2009 Sandra performed in Gdansk, Poland; with the Erato Ensemble for the "2008 Cultural Olympiad" (Vancouver & Whistler, BC) supported by organizations of Canadian Heritage Society, SOCAN, Canadian Music Centre and the 2010 Winter Olympics; and with saxophonist Julia Nolan through many parts of Canada, United States and Slovenia. Previous recital tours have also included North Dakota, northern Mexico, western Canada, and Vancouver Island. On personal invitation from Dr. Deen Larsen, her next collaboration is in July at the Franz-Schubert-Institute (Austria).

After years as faculty member of Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Langley, BC) Music Department, Sandra is now completing her second year of doctoral studies researching experimental Canadian works of the mid-twentieth century. She received a Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship, a Beryl Barns Award and the Leah Memorial Scholarship. She gratefully acknowledges support for her educational research from the Canadian Federation of University Women (National) – receiving their highest award, the Margaret McWilliams Fellowship.



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